

Huntingdon Furnace
2 miles NW of Colerain Mansion
Franklinville Vicinity
Huntingdon County
Pennsylvania

HAER No. PA-243

HAER
PA,
31-FRANK.V,
2-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record
National Park Service
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

HUNTINGDON FURNACE

HAER
PA
31-FRANK.V.
2-

HAER No. PA-243

Location: 2 miles NW of the intersection of Township Rd. 31106 with Rte 45 at Colerain Mansion, Franklinville Vicinity, Huntingdon County, Pennsylvania

Date of Construction: 1805

Builder: George Anshutz

Present Owner: Edward Newlin

Present Use: farming operation

Significance: Huntingdon Furnace is the most extensive and best-preserved iron furnace site in Huntingdon County. Together with the furnace, farms, and ore mines that surround it, this site exhibits the vast extent of a large-scale iron community.

Project Information: In February 1987, the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) and the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) began a multi-year historical and architectural documentation project in southwestern Pennsylvania. Carried out in conjunction with America's Industrial Heritage Project (AIHP), HAER undertook a comprehensive inventory of Blair and Cambria counties as the first step in identifying the region's surviving historic engineering works and industrial resources.

The results of this project have been published in Huntingdon County, Pennsylvania: An Inventory of Historic Engineering and Industrial Sites, (1991), by Nancy Shedd, Sarah Heald, editor and published by HABS/HAER for the National Park Service.

Compiler: Nancy Shedd and Ken Heineman, Historians
Gray Fitzsimons and Kenneth Rose, Editors

History:

DESCRIPTION: Huntingdon Furnace is the most extensive and best-preserved iron furnace site in Huntingdon County. Together with the furnace, farms, and ore mines that surround it, this site exhibits the vast extent of a large-scale iron community. Seven structures survive in close proximity to the furnace stack. Stack (1805): the stone blast furnace stack, 30' x 30' x 30', of random range limestone and sandstone, with round-arched openings on the east and north faces, is in excellent, unrestored condition. It offers important evidence of original construction techniques, retaining tie rods and starplates and refractory materials from an early date. Company Store: a three-bay, two-story brick building, painted white, is approximately 30' x 25', with a two-story rear ell. Converted to a residence at least sixty years ago, the building displays many features added at that time: decoratively shaped, exposed rafter ends on house and porch roofs; steel-framed casement windows; exterior stone chimney and stone-pillared side porch; latticed, hipped-roofed front stoop. Office: the 25' x 20', two-story, two-bay building of coursed sandstone rubble, has six-over-six-light double-hung windows. The large stone chimney at the end of a paved area (southwest side) remains from a now-demolished section of the original building. Ironmaster's Mansion (1851): the front block of this two-story L-shaped frame mansion is 50' wide with five bays and three gable-roofed dormers. Its three-bay porch features a paneled ceiling and wall above wainscoting, and decoratively patterned cast-iron architectural elements. The rear ell has two different roof heights, reflecting varied interior ceiling heights and story levels. The standing-seam metal roof overhangs intricately patterned trim which surrounds the entire house. Six-over-six-light double-hung windows are combined with paired round-topped attic windows in the gable ends. Grist mill (1808): the 50' x 45', three-and-one-half-story rubble-stone building predates the 45' x 35' post-and-beam addition with its weathered clapboard siding. The mill retains its overshot water wheel. Of all-iron construction, the wheel was supplied with water from an iron pipe that

extends from the creek to the wheel. The wheel and pipe, as well as the metal roof of the mill building, are deteriorating. The north wall of the mill is partially collapsed where the wheel shaft pierces it. The massive interior timbers are finely finished, with chamfered posts and girders, and beading on the joists and undersides of flooring. Some milling machinery remains, as does a small AC generator manufactured by the Crocker-Wheeler Company. Mill House: the 20' x 15', two-story stone section with large gable-end fireplace was recently restored and has a new roof and large new wing. Worker's House: this two-story exposed log house, 24' x 18' with rear ell, is the only known example of half-dovetailed log construction in the county; the integrity of the house is greatly compromised by its 1920s casement windows and stone-pillared porch.

HISTORY: Huntingdon Furnace was developed by George Anshutz, an experienced ironmaker from Alsace, France. Anshutz had built the first iron furnace in the Pittsburgh area in 1792. However, after only a few years the venture failed, in part because it was too far from its source of ore. Anshutz came to the Juniata Valley seeking a favorable iron-producing location, and by 1796 had joined with other investors in building a furnace on Warriors Mark Run, two miles north of the present furnace site. By 1805, the first stack had been abandoned and the present furnace built. Doing business at this time as John Gloninger & Co., the Huntingdon Furnace operation acquired thousands of acres of timber, ore mines and farm land. A forge, established by Phineas Massey on Spruce Creek in 1798, was occupied by the Huntingdon Furnace owners beginning in

1800, and a stone mill was erected about 1808. The enterprise also developed Tyrone Forges, six miles away on the Little Juniata, where a rolling mill, slitting mill, and nail factory operated, in addition to a large grist mill that survives today (included in the HAER survey of Blair County). The Manufacturers' Reports of the 1820 census showed the combined Gloninger enterprises employing 206 men, which probably does not include the charcoal producers, ore miners, and farmers associated with the operation.

In the 1830s Huntingdon Furnace's vast holdings became the property of the "Iron King," Peter Shoenberger, of the Juniata Valley and Pittsburgh (although his empire extended beyond this region). At his death in 1854 the land passed to his sons, George and John. By the 1880s the furnace was out of blast because of the depression in the iron trade. However, the furnace farms were still cultivated and more than a century later the properties continue to be successfully farmed. The present owner, Edward Newlin, is the latest in a long line of farmers who have presided over the large-scale farming operations that replaced the intense industrial activity that once dominated this site.

The stone grist mill was built about 1808 to supply flour for the iron-workers' families and feed for the horses, mules, and cows at Huntingdon Furnace. It continued to serve farmers in the area until about 1920. Additionally, in the first half of the nineteenth century, it is reported to have accommodated the first Sunday school and church meetings of the iron works community. Later, after it ceased to be used for grinding grain, its turbines were replaced with the metal water wheel that survives; this wheel was subsequently connected to a small AC generator that the Lake and Hindman families used to furnish their property with electricity.

Sources:

- Africa, J. Simpson. History of Huntingdon and Blair Counties, Pennsylvania. Philadelphia: Louis H. Everts, 1883.
- Brueggelors, Barbara. "Country Scene Brings to Mind Bit of History" Centre Daily Times. (State College, PA), 26 May 1984.
- Huntingdon County Tax Assessments for Franklin Township, 1790-1833. Huntingdon County Historical Society, Huntingdon, Pennsylvania.
- Huntingdon Furnace Record Books. Lists and notes made by Nancy Shedd and George Drobnock at Huntingdon Furnace, 12 September 1976. (Notes in the possession of Nancy Shedd.)
- Private photograph collection of Newlin Family, owners of Huntingdon Furnace. Tyrone, Pennsylvania.
- Nearhoof, Elizabeth. Echoes from Warriors Mark, Pennsylvania, and Surrounding Areas. Boalsburg: Printed privately, 1968.
- Shedd, Nancy S., and Harshbarger, Jean P. Second Century: A Huntingdon County Bicentennial Album. Huntingdon: Huntingdon County Historical Society, 1987.
- Shoenberger family file. Huntingdon County Historical Society, Huntingdon, Pennsylvania.
- U.S. Census Bureau. Manuscript Reports of Manufactures, 1820, 1850, 1860, 1870.